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true to another. In most things our experiences are so nearly alike we may, and do, "postulate an irrelevance of differences." For the reason that we are social beings there cannot be anarchy in the realm of our truths. That there will be *some* difference in our truths the fact that we are also individuals will make inevitable. But in all those cases where social action is essential our truths will be nearly enough alike to work together.

To the objection that what is truth to-day may be error to-morrow, the answer is that if to-morrow is sufficiently distant in the future it may well be. Pragmatists, if a very humble member of the confraternity may speak for them, believe that *all* truth is in the process of change, some of it in very rapid process, some in a process so gradual as to be almost, or quite, imperceptible. Some truth is so well established that no change seems likely to occur in it within any time that can mean much to us. Maybe a figure may help us here. According to the geologist the whole surface of the earth, that is the land surface, is in process of weathering, from the lightest dust which the wind drives before it to the granite core of the mountain. But that does not mean that the earth's surface will all be changed to-morrow, or that the mountain climber of to-day will not find his mountain there next year, should he care to climb it again. So it is with truth. We cannot say that there is any part of it that will never be questioned and overthrown. But we can say that it is stable enough for us to find our way about in it, and be able to recognize the old peaks to-morrow.

I shall not apologize again. If this has not interested you, you have thrown it away long ago. If it has interested you, no apology is necessary.

Very sincerely yours,

M. JAY FLANNERY.

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#### EDITORIAL REPLY.

In answer to your first point I have to say that you are right: "No better pragmatic example could have been chosen" than the Rothschild case of making a lie work. A lie may be made to work, but that will never change a lie into truth, as according to pragmatic terminology it ought to. The Rothschild case proves that the pragmatic definition of truth is somehow deficient.

I do not think that I have misunderstood Professor James, or missed his meaning; but I think that he formulated his definition of truth so as to point out the practical, not the theoretical, significance of truth—a method which is fundamentally wrong, if he has in mind to build up a theory of the world, of life, of scientific knowledge, and of truth in general. His preference for the practical is justifiable, but he has carried it to extremes where it is no longer applicable.

As to the second point, I will grant that there is no essential difference between the two definitions of truth, viz., that of Professor James, that it is “a relation, not of our ideas of non-human realities, but of conceptual parts of our experience to sensational parts,” and the definition quoted from me: “Truth means that a subjective statement properly describes or represents an objective condition of things.” The objective condition is always pictured first in sensational experience, and our conception of objective existence is based upon sensational experience. This is one of Kant’s discoveries and need no more be discussed. But while sense-impressions are subjective and may be different in different individuals, there are elements in them which are stable and they constitute the basis of objective truth. These elements are purely formal features of experience which can be systematized in the purely formal sciences, arithmetic, geometry, logic. As soon as man begins to count and to measure, he thinks in objective terms. His sense-impressions may be faulty, he may be more or less color-blind, but if he makes a proper use of numbers and measures, his statements cease to be purely subjective and he furnishes data for building up scientific theories.

Pragmatists have failed to make a difference between the different statements of observation, and thus truth to them is and remains subjective. Its only guarantee of being of superior value to statements which may be less true is its practical usefulness. In spite of the importance which usefulness has in our appreciation of truth, I cannot help saying that the pragmatic definition of truth is extremely superficial.

Your explanation that for practical purposes it remains quite indifferent for a farmer to look upon the earth as a plane is quite obvious, and nobody will deny it. If we did not understand it as a matter of course, it might help us to explain how Professor James came to the conclusion that the earth of such people is really flat,

but it would none the less not excuse the use of the word "truth" under such circumstances.

This leads me to your third point in which you seem to identify truth with belief. Truth as I conceive it has nothing to do with the conception of truth. The latter may be and naturally is mostly a social experience, but this is exactly the fault of the pragmatists that they do not distinguish between truth itself and the subjective conception of truth. The former is an ideal, and what we call science is a method of work which realizes a gradual approximation to it. The attainment of truth in all completeness may be impossible, but our approach to it is not for that reason by any means either fantastic or illusory. Science holds an important position in the sphere of human activity and possesses features of greatest significance. The mistake of pragmatism is that it underrates the significance of science. But for all that, science will work on even where its significance is misunderstood.

Professor James never really understood the significance of science. He was an ingenious, highly interesting and personally lovable man. Whatever he discussed, or included in the field of his investigation, became interesting. His theories were rarely correct, generally inexact, but always fascinating. He never cared to work out his thoughts into a system that would be free from contradictions. His observations were scintillating with intellectual pyrotechnics. His success in his philosophical propositions was more due to his personal qualities than to the intrinsic value of his thought. He had a certain instinct to take the wrong and deck it out in such splendor that it became interesting to the masses, but errors in his hand, though they become beautiful and attractive, remained errors for all that and in his pragmatism his errors reached the danger point. In this connection he stood out in strong contrast with men who saw the only true philosophy in the philosophy of science which would demand of us, first a recognition of the significance of science; secondly, an understanding of the real meaning of science; and thirdly, its application to practical life.

This philosophy of science, which may also be called the philosophy of form, is based upon the objective character of our purely formal sciences. No one can learn to think scientifically who is not a master of the formal sciences. They are the basis of all objective knowledge, and thus they alone can give us the key to a comprehension of the world and the assurance of the reliability

of scientific truth. For a short statement of my views on this subject I refer the reader to my pamphlet, *The Philosophy of Form*.

Any truth once stated will remain true. Our conception of truth to-day may later prove to be insufficient and will change in so far as it will have to be stated more broadly as soon as we have discovered truths that are supplementary. Thus the truth of to-day will have to be amplified by the new truths of to-morrow, but if a truth is correctly stated to-day it will never become an untruth or a lie. The truth of to-day will always remain a truth, although it may become a stepping-stone for a higher truth that will be broader and more exact. Such are scientific truths. The shape of the earth was as good as flat to the Egyptian peasant, but the "flatness" of the earth really referred at that time only to the valley of the Nile, not to the whole earth. The conception of flatness of the earth as a whole was never true. Even though the Egyptian farmer may not have had the data in his hands by which he could disprove his incorrect notion; even though there may be many conceptions which are erroneous or purely subjective, and which we could never disprove, still the ideal of truth remains as significant and indispensable for science as our confidence in and reliance upon methodologically systematized knowledge, in other words, our confidence in science.

Here lies the main error of pragmatism.

According to the belief of Professor James's friend, Mr. Charles S. Peirce, the pragmatic applicability of truth is most essential, and the theory of gravitation would find serious refutation to-day if it would be to any one's pecuniary advantage to deny Newton's view of gravitation. That the theory of gravitation has been accepted, is, as Mr. Peirce suggested, mainly due to the fact that there were no pecuniary or practical interests that militated against its acceptability. This may or may not be true; at any rate I am not prepared to deny it. I believe that pragmatism carries the practical criterion of truth to a degree where it becomes actually dangerous to our philosophical well-being.

EDITOR.

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